



## **INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

### **Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) Patient Information**

#### **What is MRSA?**

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a germ (bacterium) that normally lives in the nose, rectum and on skin of healthy people. MRSA is a strain of *Staphylococcus aureus* that is resistant to a group of antibiotics including “Methicillin”. MRSA germs are not usually harmful to healthy people, but can cause infection in those who are seriously ill.

#### **How do people get MRSA?**

MRSA is spread from one person to another by contact. Caregivers’ hands can become contaminated either by touching the person with MRSA or touching articles or equipment contaminated by MRSA; caregivers can then transfer the germ to others. Patients who have been in a hospital or in a rehabilitation or long term care facility are more likely to get MRSA.

#### **How does MRSA make people sick?**

Many of the bacteria that live on or in your body are good for you. Although, MRSA is not usually harmful, it may cause infection if it enters the body through breaks in the skin, the bladder, or an intravenous catheter site (IV).

#### **What are the symptoms of an MRSA infection?**

Symptoms of an MRSA infection depend on the area of the body affected. A fever is common. If MRSA is found in your bladder, the symptoms will be the same as with a regular bladder infection. If MRSA infects a cut or wound you may notice warmth, redness, swelling and pus.

#### **Can infections with MRSA be treated?**

MRSA infections are treated with specific antibiotics. Sometimes MRSA is present in your body but not causing any symptoms of infection (also called colonization); when this is the case you will not need treatment with antibiotics.

#### **What does the Hospital do to prevent the spread of MRSA?**

Hand washing is the most important way for everyone to prevent the spread of ALL germs. If you are tested and found to carry MRSA you may be moved to a private room, and your healthcare provider may need to wear gloves and a gown. During the time you have MRSA, you will be asked to stay in your room; however, you may still have visitors. It is very important that visitors clean their hands upon entering and

exiting your room. In the hospital, visitors who provide care to you will need to wear a gown and gloves. Before leaving your room, visitors must remove the gloves and gown and dispose of them in the garbage container and linen hamper located in your room. Please remind visitors not to use your bathroom. People who are known to be carrying MRSA will be tested on each admission to see if the bacteria are still present.

You need to clean your hands:

- After using the bathroom
- After blowing your nose
- When your hands are visibly dirty (soiled)
- Before and after you touch your dressing or wounds
- Before you leave your room
- Before eating and drinking

### **Are special precautions needed for MRSA at home?**

Generally speaking, people in the hospital are sicker and more susceptible to infection than people in the community. At home, precautions do not need to be as strict. However, certain steps can help reduce the risk of spreading this germ to family members and other visitors.

1. The most important thing is to keep your hands very clean. Caregivers should wash their hands before and after providing care. If you have a draining wound, it should be covered with a clean and dry bandage.
2. Most household cleaning products or diluted household bleach (1 part bleach to 10 parts water) will destroy this germ. Use friction and leave cleaned surfaces to air dry so the cleaner can work properly. Clothing can be laundered in the usual manner. Always start with the cleanest areas of the room and leave the dirtiest areas to the last.
3. You may visit other people and carry on your normal life activities. If you are planning to visit someone in the hospital, talk to the Nurse to make sure you are not placing that person at risk of getting your MRSA.

### **What do I need to know prior to discharge?**

People carrying MRSA need to let healthcare providers know so that steps can be taken to decrease the risk of spreading the bacteria to others.

If you have questions about the information in this document, contact Queensway Carleton Hospital's Infection Prevention and Control at 721-2000, ext. 3777.

### **Reference:**

Public Health Ontario. Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC) Best Practices: Annex A- Screening, Testing and Surveillance for Antibiotic-resistant Organisms (AROs) January 2013 MRSA Fact Sheet for Patients and Visitors